



UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION AMONG GAY STUDENTS AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Romantic love and sexual attraction between males are known as 'gay'. At present in India and in many other cultures, all orientations and behaviors other than heterosexuality have been seen as "unnatural", "abnormal" and "sinful". For this reason when a gay student interacts with family members, peers, teachers and staff, he faces various kinds of problems. It may be discrimination (from society members), neglect, bullying, stigmatization, humiliation and sexual harassment. As a result a depressive situation is created in their mind. In this study the overall level of depression of Gay students at higher education level in West Bengal have been analyzed with regard to their education level, siblings and different caste identity. For the present study 60 male homosexual students studying in graduate and post graduate course of the age group of 18- 24 years are selected as sample from different districts in west Bengal. Back's Depression Inventory (BDI-II) was used as a measuring instrument for data collection regarding gay students' depression. Collected data were analyzed using the statistics- Mean, percentage analysis and Chi- Squire Test were conducted with SPSS programme. The findings of this study indicates that the rate of prevalence of depression among most of gay students found to be ranged from moderate to severe depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression and mild depression level. Hypotheses were tested at probability level of 0.05. No significant difference in the level of depression was observed among Gay students with regard to their education level, siblings and different caste identity.

KEYWORDS: Gay, Depression.

INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality is romantic love and sexual attraction between members of the same sex. People who are homosexual, particularly males are known as 'gay', and females are known as 'lesbians'. Male homosexual or gay is physically and mentally attraction and sexual relationship between two males. There are some males who have no physically and mentally disability but their feelings are like women. So, in spite of being a male, the feminine attitude is observed to the same sense and feeling sexual attraction to a male. They are known as male homosexual or gay. At present in India and in many other cultures, all orientations and behaviors other than heterosexuality have been seen as "unnatural", "abnormal" and "sinful" (Manvi Arora (2014), but scientific research shows that homosexuality is a normal and natural variation in human sexuality and is not in and of itself a source of negative psychological effects. Karoli Maria Kertbeny first coined the term homosexual and homosexuality and argued that homosexuality was inborn and unchangeable and rather normal. A population- based study in the American journal of public Health reported that the social stigma of homosexuality and discrimination have a negative effect on the mental health of gays (Mays & Cochran, 2003). In the present time depression is increasingly common mental disorder among gay students, which manifested by depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation. The American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organisation officially accepted its normal variant status.

Depression among Gay Students at Higher Education

When a homosexual child reaches adolescent period, it bears some changes within him. Thereafter when he goes to school and college and spends time with peer group and communicates with teacher-mistress, he feels uncomfortable. He can't adjust properly in this environment. When he is pursuing course and acquires knowledge, he faces various type of difficulties. Every individual has its own basic needs (e.g.-sex, safety, love, belongingness and self-esteem). When a homosexual student tries to fulfill it, this is known as the abnormality in Indian context. Every society has its own criteria of normality and every individual has its own psychology. A homosexual student's psychology is different from other heterosexual student. So, there is a conflict between society's norms and individual's psychology. There are some social norms, medical norms, norm of law and individuals' own perceptions, which deviate them from the normal behaviour. Due to all these deviations, they think that they are the imperfect one to the society, hunted by the inferiority complex. As a result when he interacts with family members, peers, teachers and staff, he faces various kinds of problems. It may be discrimination (from society members), neglect, bullying, stigmatization, humiliation and sexual harassment. As a result a depressive situation is created in their mind.

In west Bengal a study conducted by Chatterjee (2014), observed that gay people, as member of a social minority group and they are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation. A study in Kolkata conducted by Ganguli (2013),

found that homosexual faced more problems than heterosexual because of their sexuality. Sexual differences created social injustice and homosexual were negotiating their own space with our heterosexist society. Negative outcomes for victimization; gay students faced more problems like absenteeism, lower academic achievement, alcohol related problems (Elizabeth A.M Strunz, 2015). Therefore, risk of depression and suicidal tendency increased among gay students. From various studies, it has been observed that gay men faced more problem than heterosexual men.

Objectives of the study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To find out the rate of prevalence of depression of gay students at higher education (UG and PG) level in West Bengal.
2. To find out the relationship of depression of gay students with respect to their siblings.
3. To find out the depression level among gay students at higher education level with respect to their different types of caste.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated in connection with the objectives stated:

- ^aH₁: There is no significant difference between under graduate and post graduate gay students in terms of their depression level.
- ^aH₂: There is no significant difference in depression level among gay students in terms of siblings.
- ^aH₃: There is no significant difference of depression level among gay students in terms of their different caste identity.

Population, Sample and sampling procedure

All the gay students at higher education level of the age group of 18 to 24 years of the state of west Bengal were considered as population of the study. The researchers identified the gay students as sample for this study purposively as this study was intended to assess the depression condition of these gay students at higher education level. For the present study 60 gay students studying in graduate and post graduate course of the age group of 18- 24 years are selected from different districts in west Bengal. After identifying the sample, the researchers used convenient sampling technique for collection of data from the sample. Here, the researchers collected the data from those who were easily or conveniently available to them.

Tool used for data collection

In the present study, the researchers used Back Depression Inventory (BDI-II). The tool consists of 21 items, presented in multiple-choice format, which measure presence and degree of depression in adolescent and adult consistent with the —Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition (DSM-IV; 1994). The 21 items cover sadness, pessimism, past failure, loss of pleasure, guilt, feelings, punishment feelings, self-dislike, self-criticalness, suicidal thoughts, crying, agitation, loss of interest, indecisiveness,

worthlessness, loss of energy, changes in sleeping pattern, irritability, changes in appetite, concentration difficulty, tiredness or fatigue and loss of interest in sex. There is a four point scale for each item ranging from 0- 3. On two items (16 and 18) there are seven options to indicate either an increase or decrease of appetite and sleep. Total score of 0-13 is considered minimal range, 14- 19 is mild, 20-28 is moderate and 29-63 is severe.

Method of data Collection

In this study, first the researchers identified the gay student at higher education level by the help of social media (Face Book). Then he tried to establish rapport with them and inform about their study. Finally they were able to convince some of these students to give data for the purpose of his study. As per their conversation via telephone and face book, the researchers went to different districts in west Bengal. Then they personally met each of them and gave necessary instruction relevant for filling up of this Back Depression Inventory (BDI-II). Then they distributed the inventory to each of them and accordingly asked them to give their response by filling it. They collected the inventory from them after 10-15 minutes.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Comparison of Depression Problem between Gay Students Studying in Under Graduate and Post Graduate Level

The following Table-1 showed that the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students with respect to education level (UG and PG) of the students.

Depression* Education Level of Gay Student Cross Tabulation					
			Education Level		Total
			Under Graduate	Post Graduate	
Depression Level	Considered	Count	3	5	8
		% Within Education Level	7.5%	25%	13.33%
		% of Total	5%	8.33%	13.33%
	Minimal Range	Count	7	1	8
		% Within Education Level	17.5%	5%	13.33%
		% of Total	11.67%	1.67%	13.33%
	Mild	Count	18	10	28
		% Within Education Level	45%	50%	46.67%
		% of Total	30%	16.67%	46.67%
	Moderate	Count	12	4	16
		% Within Education Level	30%	20%	26.67%
		% of Total	20%	6.67%	26.67%
Severe	Count	40	20	60	
	% Within Education Level	100%	100%	100%	
	% of Total	66.67%	33.33%	100%	

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Depression Problem on the basis of Education Level of the Gay Students

It is observed from the above table that out of 40 under graduate gay students 18 students i.e. 45 % of students have moderate depression and 12 (30%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 3(7.5%) and 7(17.5%) students possessed considered minimal range and mild depression respectively. That means it can be concluded that cumulatively the rate of prevalence of depression among most of under graduate students i.e. 75% found to be ranged from moderate to severe depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 7.5% and mild depression level i.e. 17.5%.

Again out of 20 post graduate gay students 10 students i.e. 50 % of students have moderate depression and 4 (20%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 5 (25%) and 1(5%) students possessed considered minimal range and mild depression respectively. That means it can be concluded that the rate of prevalence of depression among most of post graduate gay students i.e. 50% found moderate depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 25% and severe depression level i.e. 20% and very few students possessed mild depression i.e. 5%. The illustration is given in figure -1.

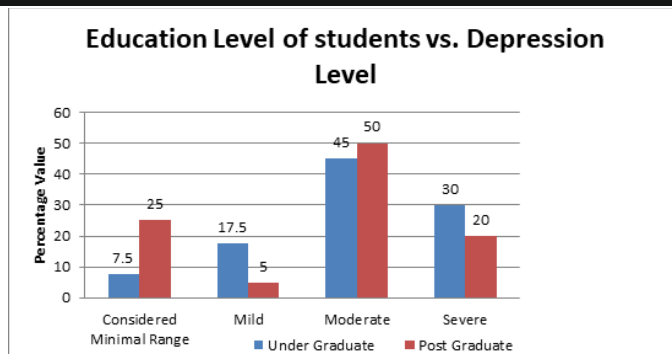


Figure 1: Education Level of the Students Wise Distribution of Depression Problem

However, while comparing the prevalence rate of depression among under graduate and post graduate students, it has been found that out of total 60 gay students 40 (66.67%) were under graduate students whereas 20 (33.33%) were post graduate students. The percentage of students having depression of considered minimum range of under graduate and post graduate levels are 5% and 8.33% respectively. That means percentage of post graduate students having minimal depression range is more than that of under graduate students. The percentage of students having mild depression of under graduate and post graduate levels are 11.67% and 1.67% respectively which indicates percentage of under graduate students having mild depression range is more than that of post graduate students. The percentages of students having moderate depression of under graduate and post graduate levels are 30% and 16.67% respectively. That means percentage of under graduate students having moderate depression range is more than that of post graduate students. The percentages of students from under graduate and post graduate levels having severe depression are 20% and 6.67% respectively which indicates rate of severe depression found quite more among under graduate students than post graduate students.

In short, the depression levels of considered minimum range found more among post graduate student than under graduate students and mild found more among under graduate students than post graduate students whereas the moderate and severe levels of depression is found more among under graduate students than post graduate students. Hence, it can be concluded that overall, the under graduate students were found more depressed than post graduate students as moderate and severe levels of depressions were found more among under graduate students than post graduate students.

Comparison of Depression Problem between Single Child and Children with Siblings

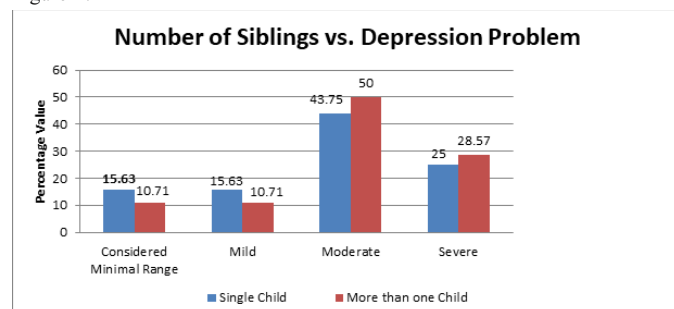
The study showed that the rate of prevalence of depression among male homosexual students varied for No. of Siblings of students, which is given in Table-2.

Depression* Number of Siblings Cross Tabulation					
			Number of Siblings		Total
			Single	More than one	
Depression Level	Considered	Count	5	3	8
		% Within Number of Siblings	15.63%	10.71%	13.33%
		% of Total	8.33%	5%	13.33%
	Minimal Range	Count	5	3	8
		% Within Number of Siblings	15.63%	10.71%	13.33%
		% of Total	8.33%	5%	13.33%
	Mild	Count	5	3	8
		% Within Number of Siblings	15.63%	10.71%	13.33%
		% of Total	8.33%	5%	13.33%
	Moderate	Count	14	14	28
		% Within Number of Siblings	43.75%	50%	46.67%
		% of Total	23.33%	23.32%	46.67%
Severe	Count	8	8	16	
	% Within Number of Siblings	25%	28.57%	26.67%	
	% of Total	13.33%	13.33%	26.67%	
Total		Count	32	28	60
		% Within Number of Siblings	100%	100%	100%
		% of Total	53.33%	46.67%	100%

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Depression Problem on the basis of No. of Siblings Variable

It is observed from the above table that out of 60 gay students, 32 (53.33%) gay students were single child of the parents with no siblings and 28 (46.67%) had one or more siblings. Out of 32 gay students, 14 students i.e. 43.75% of students have moderate depression and 8 (25%) students have severe depressions. It is also found that only 5 (15.63%) and 5(15.63%) students possessed considered minimal range and mild depression respectively. That means it can be concluded that the rate of prevalence of depression among most of gay students i.e. 68.75% found to be ranged moderate to severe depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 15.63% and mild depression level i.e. 15.63%.

Again out of 28 gay students who have one or more siblings, 14 students i.e. 50 % of students have moderate depression and 8 (28.57%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 3 (10.71%) and 3(10.71%) students possessed considered minimal range and mild depression respectively. That means it can be concluded that the rate of prevalence of depression among most of gay students i.e. 78.57% found to be ranged moderate to severe depression level and very few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 10.71% and mild depression level i.e. 10.71%. The distribution illustrated in Figure-2.

**Figure 2: No. of Sibling Wise Distribution of Depression Problem**

However, while comparing the prevalence rate of depression among gay students, who is single child and who have one or more siblings, it has been found that out of total 60 students 32 (53.33%) were single child whereas 28 (46.67%) had one or more siblings. The percentage of students having depression of considered minimum range of single child and children who had one or more siblings were 8.33% and 5% respectively. That means percentage of single child having minimum depression range is more than that of children who have one or more siblings. The percentages of students having mild depression of single child and children who had one or more siblings were 8.33% and 5% respectively which indicates percentage of single child having mild depression range is more than that of children who had one or more siblings. The percentage of students having moderate depression of single child and children who had one or more siblings was 23.33% and 23.32% respectively. That means percentage of single child having moderate depression range is slightly more than that of children who had one or more siblings. The percentages of students having severe depression of single child and children who had one or more siblings were 13.33% and 13.33% respectively which indicates rate of severe depression found same among single child and children who had one or more siblings.

In short, the depression levels of considered minimal range and mild found more among single child than children who had one or more siblings whereas the moderate and severe levels of depression is found slightly more among single child than the children who had one or more siblings. Hence, it can be concluded that the overall, slightly more depression were found in single child than the children who had one or more siblings.

Comparison the rate of Prevalence of different levels of Depression among Gay students with respect to different types of Castes identity

The following Table-3 showed that the rate of prevalence of depression problem among gay students with respect to different types of caste (General, SC, OBC).

Depression* Caste Cross Tabulation						
Depression Level	Considered Minimal Range	Count	Caste			Total
			General	SC	OBC	
		% Within Caste	13.04%	25%	0.00%	13.33%
		% of Total	10%	3.33%	0.00%	13.33%
		Count	6	2	0	8
	Mild	% Within Caste	13.04%	0.00%	33.33%	13.33%
		% of Total	10%	0.00%	3.33%	13.33%
		Count	22	4	2	28
	Moderate	% Within Caste	47.82%	50%	33.33%	46.67%
		% of Total	36.67%	6.67%	3.33%	46.67%
		Count	12	2	2	16
	Severe	% Within Caste	26.09%	25%	33.33%	26.67%
		% of Total	20%	3.33%	3.33%	26.67%
		Count	8	6	6	20

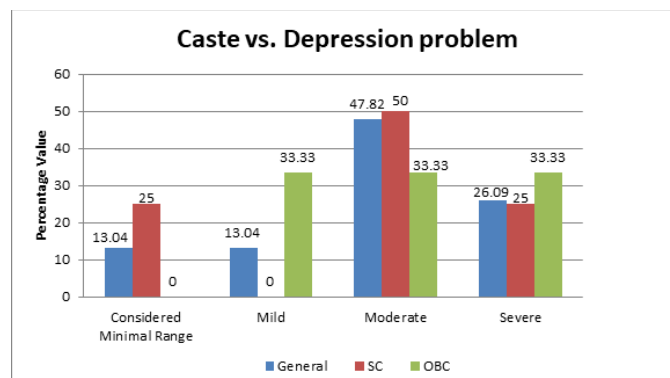
Total	Count	46	8	6	60
	% Within Caste	100%	100%	100%	100%
	% of Total	76.67%	13.33%	10%	100%

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Depression Problem on the basis of caste variable

It is observed from the above table that out of 46 general students 22 students i.e. 47.82 % of students have moderate depression and 12 students (26.09%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 6 (13.04%) and 6(13.04%) students possessed considered minimal range and mild depression respectively. That means it can be concluded that cumulatively the rate of prevalence of depression among most of general students i.e. 73.91% found to be ranged from moderate to severe depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 13.04% and mild depression level i.e. 13.04%.

Again out of 8 SC students 4 students i.e. 50 % of students have moderate depression and 2 students (25%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 2(25%) students possessed considered minimal range and SC students have no mild depression. That means it can be concluded that cumulatively the rate of prevalence of depression among most of SC students i.e. 75% found to be ranged moderate to severe depression level and few students possessed considered minimal range depression i.e. 25%.

Again out of 6 OBC students 2 students i.e. 33.33 % of students have moderate depression and 2 students (33.33%) students have severe depression. It is also found that only 2 (33.33%) students possessed mild depression and OBC students have no considered minimal range depression. That means it can be concluded that the rate of prevalence of depression among OBC students found considered minimal range, mild and moderate depression levels are same. The illustration is given in figure-3.

**Figure 3: Different Types of Caste Wise Distribution Depression Problem**

However, while comparing the prevalence rate of depression among general, SC and OBC students, it has been found that out of total 60 gay students 46 (76.67%) general students, 8(13.33%) SC students and 6(10%) OBC students. The percentage of students having depression of considered minimum range of general and SC students are 10% and 3.33% respectively and OBC students have no considered minimal range depression. That means percentage of general students having minimum depression range is more than that of SC students. The percentage of students having mild depression of general and OBC students are 10% and 3.33% respectively which indicates percentage of general students having mild depression range is more than that of OBC students and SC students have no mild depression. The percentage of students having moderate depression of general, SC and OBC are 36.67%, 6.67% and 3.33% respectively. That means percentage of general students having moderate depression range is more than that of SC and OBC students. The percentages of students of general, SC and OBC having severe depression are 20%, 3.33% and 3.33% respectively which indicates rate of severe depression found quite more among general students than SC and OBC students.

In short, the depression levels of considered minimum range and mild found more among general students than SC and OBC students whereas the moderate levels of depression is found more among general students than SC students and found more among SC students than OBC students and severe depression found more among general student than SC and OBC students. Hence, it can be concluded that overall, the general students were found more depressed than SC and OBC students as moderate and severe levels of depressions were found more among general students than SC and OBC students.

Hypotheses Testing

In order to test the null-hypotheses OH1 to OH3 chi-square test has been used.

H₁: There is no significant difference between under graduate and post graduate gay students in terms of their depression level.

Variable	Category	N	df	Calculated value of X ²	Asymp.sig.(2 sided)	Remarks
Level of educational qualification of the student	Under Graduate	40	3	5.196	0.158	NS* P>0.05
	Post Graduate	20				

NS*=Not Significant

Table 4: Chi-square Test showing the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students with respect to education levels of the students

Interpretation

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of $X^2 = 5.196$ and $P = 0.158$. The critical values of X^2 at 0.05 levels of significance with $3df = 7.815$. It has been observed that the calculated value of X^2 is quite lower than the critical values of X^2 at 0.05 level. So the null hypothesis can be accepted as $P > 0.01$. Hence it can be safely concluded that level of educational qualification of the gay students has no impact on the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students at higher education level.

H₂: There is no significant difference in depression level among gay students in terms of siblings.

Variable	Category	N	df	Calculated value of X ²	Asymp.sig.(2 sided)	Remarks
No. of siblings	Single child	32	3	0.737	0.865	NS* P>0.05
	More than one Children	28				

NS*=Not Significant

Table-5: Chi-square Test showing the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students with respect to number of siblings

Interpretation

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of $X^2 = 0.737$ and $P = 0.865$. The critical values of X^2 at 0.05 levels of significance with $3df = 7.815$. It has been observed that the calculated value of X^2 is quite lower than the critical values of X^2 at 0.05 level. So the null hypothesis can be accepted as $P > 0.01$. Hence it can be safely concluded that number of siblings has no impact on the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students at higher education level.

H₃: There is no significant difference of depression level among gay students in terms of their different caste identity.

Variable	Category	N	df	Calculated value of X ²	Asymp.sig.(2 sided)	Remarks
Caste	General	46	6	4.864	0.561	NS* P>0.05
	SC	8				
	OBC	6				

NS*=Not Significant

Table 6: Chi-square Test showing the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students with respect to different types of caste identity

Interpretation

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of $X^2 = 4.864$ and $P = 0.561$. The critical values of X^2 at 0.05 levels of significance with $6df = 12.592$. It has been observed that the calculated value of X^2 is quite lower than the critical values of X^2 at 0.05 level. So the null hypothesis can be accepted as $P > 0.01$. Hence it can be safely concluded that different types of caste has no impact on the rate of prevalence of depression among gay students at higher education level.

Major Finding of the Study:

The major finding of the study was in respect to the analysis and interpretations of data are given below:

• Rate of prevalence of Depression among the male Homosexual students on the basis of their education level

The rate of prevalence of different levels of depression among male homosexual students were found-

- 20% under graduate male homosexual students having severe depression and 6.67% post graduate students having severe depression level.
- 30% under graduate students having moderate depression and 16.67% post graduate students having moderate depression level.
- 11.67% under graduate students having mild depression and 1.67% post graduate students having mild depression level.
- 5% under graduate students having considered minimal range and 8.33% post graduate students having considered minimal range level.

Though male homosexual students at the post graduate level (33.33%) were found comparatively lower rate of depression than under graduate level (66.67%), but education level has no statistically significant on their depression level.

• Rate of prevalence of Depression among the male Homosexual students on the basis of number of sibling(s)

Out of total male homosexual students, the rate of prevalence of different levels of depression were found-

- 13.33% students having severe depression from single child of the parents and 13.33% students having severe depression from that of children having one or more siblings.
- 23.33% students having moderate depression from single child of the parents and 23.32% students having moderate depression from that of children having one or more siblings.
- 8.33% students having mild depression from single child of the parents and 5% students having mild depression from that of children having one or more siblings.
- 8.33% students having considered minimal range from single child of the parents and 5% students having considered minimal range from that of children having one or more siblings.

Though the rate of prevalence of overall depression was found slightly more in single child of the parents (53.33%) than that of children having one or more siblings (46.67%), but the difference was found inferential statistically not significant.

• Rate of prevalence of depression among male homosexual students with respect to their different caste identity:

Out of total male homosexual students, the rate of prevalence of different levels of depression were found-

- 20% general students having severe depression, 36.67% general students having moderate depression, 10% general students having mild depression level and 10% general students having considered minimal range depression.
- 3.33% SC students having severe depression, 6.67% SC students having moderate depression and 3.33% SC students having considered minimal range level but mild depression was not found in SC students.
- 3.33% OBC students having severe depression, 3.33% OBC students having moderate depression and 3.33% students having mild depression level but considered minimal range was not found in OBC students.

Though the rate of prevalence of overall depression was found more in general male homosexual students (76.67%) than SC (13.33%) and OBC (10%) male homosexual students and depression was found more in SC students than OBC students, but inferential statistically the difference was found not significant.

CONCLUSION

We need to understand that gays are as much human as heterosexuals are. During the 1960s and early 1970s, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder. Homosexuality as a mental disorder was struck down from the second edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. It took nearly two more decades for World Health Organization to recognize homosexuality as normal. But, the disposition of society towards the community members persists. Gay Students studying in higher education institutions in west Bengal have the right to live in a healthy, safe and secure environment, but rejection, isolation, bullying, and safety issues can all conspire to make it more difficult for gay youth to feel safe and supported. For these complex reasons depressive symptoms and suicidality often times begins in gay students. To eliminate this harassment, the law and order of higher educational institutions should be strengthened so that they do not have to face harassment in future. Inclusive law and providing a legal crutch against such issues can help to stop it. Misra (2009), said about legal and social changes will be needed for gay individuals to gain full acceptance and equality with in Indian society. From the above study moderate and severe levels of depression were found more among gay students studying in higher educational institutions of West Bengal. Moreover researches across the world have proved that students from the gay community face more mental health issues than heterosexuals in higher educational institutions. Actually, sexual orientation decides whom we are attracted to and gender identity decides how feel as male or female or different. It need not be always aligned to biological sex. Hence, awareness about gender and sexuality is the tool that creates sensitization and breaks the vicious cycle or bullying and harassment. It counters stereotypes and prejudices and provides support. Higher education institutions need to pay more attention to human rights and possible human rights violations that can happen. Institutions of higher education should emphasize not only education but also changing attitudes towards homosexuals. So, the focus needs to be on humanity and not sexual orientations. Higher education institutions need to do more research to understand the issues facing gay students. There are so many ways that higher education institutions can cultivate a safe and supportive environment for all of their students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression like- develop supportive educators, comprehensive policies, inclusive

curriculum, supportive student service and to ensure college and universities education environment free from bullying and harassment so that gay students are able to learn and grow.

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